DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 806 EA 018 231

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TITLE The High School Department Head: Powerful or Powerless in Guiding Change?
INSTITUTION Texas Univ., Austin. Research and Development Center for Teacher Education.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 4 Apr 85
NOTE 43p.; In: Symposium 56.11 of the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985); see EA 018 229.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; *Department Heads; *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Educational Innovation; *Employment Practices; *High Schools; Needs Assessment; Organizational Communication; Performance Factors; Research Needs; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Role; Work Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This report, one of four studies on roles of participants in high school change, presents data about activities of department heads in 30 schools throughout the nation. The report analyzes background research on the subject as well as popular perceptions, perceptions of teachers and administrators, and perceptions of department heads themselves concerning this particular teaching role. The finding is that, despite the general view that department heads occupy a "driver's seat" position, the most appropriate characterization is inconsistency in the way the role is operationalized across organizational structures and personnel. A variety of department head behaviors are gathered from personal interviews and organized into six roles: communicator, coordinator manager, emerging assister, teacher improver, program improver, and evaluating administrator. Five functions of these roles are described in personal activity accounts by individual department heads. Department heads often operate within parameters that are difficult to define, do not receive adequate fiscal remuneration, and are not offered sufficient inservice training, all of which influence the nature of the six roles they may assume. The study concludes with a discussion of relationships with other department heads, district office, principal, and department teachers. Further research on the department head is needed because the role is a viable one for facilitating the change process. (CJH)

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THE HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT HEAD:

POWERFUL OR POWERLESS IN GUIDING CHANGE?

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
Chicago, 1985

EA 015 231

The High School Department Head:

Powerful or Powerless in Guiding Change?[1,2]

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What is the major focus of your Department Head role?

"My role includes the responsibility of staying alert to the most recent research findings, to the development of new techniques and instructional strategies, to the availability of new programs and products; followed by disseminating the information and materials to the staff of my department and facilitating utilization by the teachers."
(Department Head A).

"In my mailbox I receive memos about meetings, scheduling and other school calendar information from the district office or from the principal; I screen it quickly to determine what needs immediate attention, duplicate it and distribute it to the mailboxes of my teachers."
(Department Head B).

The perceptions and reality of high school department head roles are as diverse as the examples above suggest, not only among those occupying the position, but also among those who relate closely to heads and among those who are removed from them in the school organization. Because the department head role has not been the focus of much research, it is not well understood and is lacking in definition, especially regarding the functions of leadership and facilitation of change.

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[1]Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, April, 1985.

[2]The research described herein was conducted under contract with the National Institute of Education. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no endorsement by the National Institute of Education should be inferred.

In this paper, which is based on the results of a three-year study of change in high schools, we describe popular perceptions of the department head role and review related literature on the topic. We then report the study findings, first the behaviors of department heads grouped in functions and the various combinations of the functions found in practice in high schools, that constitute six unique roles. To enhance the reader's understanding and to enliven the text we include short descriptive pictures or brief vignettes of department heads as we perceived them in our study. Second, we identify factors from the study that seem to have some impact on the department head role or influence its operationalization. And third, we describe the relationships department heads have with other high school and district level participants found in the study.

In the Implications and Recommendations section, we attempt to suggest from the data why some heads are active and effective in facilitating change and school improvement, and others are not, and develop some propositions as a result of our analysis. We conclude this section with recommendations regarding the department head role for policymakers, researchers and practitioners.

Background Research and Popular Perceptions of Department Heads

In our search to understand the role of the high school department head, we found a very limited literature base related directly to high schools. However, we found a number of widely held, data-free perceptions that seek to explain the role.

Review of the Literature

Institutions of higher education (IHE) have been the setting for many detailed department head studies. Direct transfer of information between the

two contexts does not seem practical. Of the literature specifically drawn from high school departments, only a fragment is based on research.

Reports of heads' suggestions. A portion of the literature specifically addressed to high school department heads seems to be composed of suggestions based on the author's years of experience in the position. This literature tends to be subject matter specific and deals primarily with "How To Be A Good Science/Mathematics/English Department Head." For example, Adams (1983) offers advice to English department chairs on the behavior of academic departments. Duxbury (1984), based on his own years of experience as a department head, discusses the main features of the department head's role in determining the success of girls in physics.

Small narrow studies. Another portion of the department head literature, while based on research, utilizes samples limited by either the small number of subjects or the narrow focus of the sample population. Free (1982) describes the way one principal involved teachers in the selection of a department head. Fellows and Potter (1984) generate recommendations for job descriptions based on an examination of job specifications found in advertisements in "The Times Educational Supplement." Davies (1983) presents data and makes recommendations concerning decision making gathered from a limited survey of secondary department heads in Great Britain. Weaver (1979) makes recommendations for inservice education based on a survey of 76 department heads. Papalia (1970) offers suggestions to department heads based solely on a survey of foreign language departments. While the information in these reports is interesting, it is difficult to generalize.

Leadership and principal literature. There is a substantial body of literature concerning high school department heads which draws on general leadership literature and on studies of the role of the principal. Turner

(1983) encourages school administrators to develop leadership competencies for department heads and suggests readings from the leadership literature. While at first glance this may seem like a logical horizontal transfer, on closer inspection the information may not be generalizable to high school department heads. High schools generally function within a context that specifies the goals and objectives of programs, thus reducing the base of influence of heads. Department heads are further restricted by the nested compartmentalized environment of high schools. It is clear that the role of high school department heads does not have the scope of the principal's role. To suggest that guidelines for effective functioning of principals are easily transferable between the two seems to be an overgeneralization. Department heads without the power of teacher evaluation, hiring, and firing simply do not own the power of a principal with those options.

Application of higher education studies. Finally, a large part of department head literature comes from research based in higher education settings. For example, Marcial (1984) attempts to apply the conclusions from Bennet's (1982) IHE-based department head research to high school department heads. Sergiovanni (1984) attempts a similar transfer. But, because of contextual differences, IHE findings may not be directly applicable to high schools. Among the observable differences between IHEs and high schools are community expectations, contractual limitations, and the nature of the student body. Generally, the expectations of a community about the educational outcomes of high school students and IHE students differ. High schools are seen as a place for learning "the basics," while IHEs are often perceived as places for specialized, professional training. Additionally high schools not only must be concerned with the academic development of students but also are expected to attend to the day-to-day realities such as student attendance

policies. Because student attendance is mandated throughout most of the high school experience, heads must often struggle with a lack of motivation. That is not to say that IHE faculties are blessed with classrooms full of highly motivated students. Rather, part of a high school head's responsibility is motivating students. That norm is not as prevalent in the IHE teaching culture. Another direct limitation on high school department heads are contractual constraints. Department heads usually fall under teacher, rather than administrator, negotiations. Because of this classification, the potentially more powerful functions of the role, such as evaluation and hiring are often outside of the high school department head's realm of responsibility. IHE department heads generally negotiate such powers into the role (Douglas, 1983).

The generalizability of most department head studies is limited. Use of small or subject matter specific samples restricts a broad application of the findings to the more general focus on department heads. Many recommendations generated from the department head literature are based on opinion rather than grounded in a researched data base. Studies from IHE settings and recommendations elicited from the leadership literature do not acknowledge the unique characteristics of the role of the high school department head. Indeed, gaps in the current literature illuminate the need for extensive research specifically targeted toward understanding the department head's role in the high school setting. Some of these gaps seem filled by "popular perceptions" rather than grounded research findings.

Popular Perceptions

The role of department chairperson or department head can be portrayed as one of "paper pusher" at the one extreme and as "commander in chief" at the other, depending on who is describing the role. Because there has been little

study that defines and describes the role, a wide variety of data-free perceptions abound. A very popular belief about heads relates to the way high schools are structured as departments.

Perceptions influenced by departmental organization. The typical high school, unless it is quite small, is organized in a cellular fashion into subject/academic discipline groupings or departments. These groupings have a specific academic or topical focus which tends to result in small, closed social systems that serve as rallying points in an otherwise large and loosely coupled organization. Given this departmental organization of high schools and related situational factors, such as teachers' identification with the department rather than with the school overall, it is widely assumed that the chairpersons of departments are a leverage point for change.

Principals, associate principals, and other administrators all too frequently are viewed by teachers, because of their lack of experience and subject-related intellectual credentials, as quite isolated from them. This experiential and intellectual issue is theoretically solved in the person of the department chair. The academic resistance that teachers hold about principals is absent in their relationship with their department heads. The head's academic expertise provides cement which can hold the department's teachers together, promoting its insulation from outside influence, its autonomy, and its opportunity for self-direction, thus providing leadership possibilities for heads.

Alfonso (1983) posits that the point of entry with secondary school teachers, if not always, most frequently is through their subject area department. Thus, in addition to the organizational structure, expertise in the subject area provides a ready-made possibility for the department head to perform as leader and change facilitator. This rational view of the

department head's potential role seems widely held by the professional community and by the public at large.

Perceptions by school administrators and teachers. Like those who view the departmental structure of high schools as a positive factor that supports departmental change, many high school principals and assistant principals concede leadership and decision-making power to the department head. They see the head as one who manages personnel and a budget and distributes resources, thus deriving power to influence teachers. There is, of course, a wide variation in the amount and degree to which the head utilizes this distributive power and exercises leadership, management, and decisionmaking; however, many principals report that their department heads have a great deal of responsibility for "making things go right" in their departments, without intervention from administrators. Administrators also view heads as subject specialists who know their subject and who know their teacher colleagues. For these reasons, many administrators tend to view the department head position as a locus of power and influence, although the power may not be formalized.

Teachers hold a mixed view of heads. While some teachers accede significant power to their department heads, others view them more as teaching colleagues. But because of the heads' differentiating title, many teachers look to this person as responsible for making the system work and for facilitating the work they must all do. Many teachers report to the head in the event of their absence. If school leave is to be sought, it is done frequently through the office of the head, rather than through the school's central office. Since most heads hold the keys to the supply room, the requisition forms for materials, and the budget, teachers view them with a measure of authority. It should be noted again that this view is not uniformly held by all teachers.

Perceptions by the department heads. Before we began our high school studies, several department heads we knew expressed their views. "Actually, I'm just a conduit for sending management and logistical messages to teachers," one department head expressed. Heads saw their typical responsibilities of communicating and coordinating as a poor platform for exercising leadership. On the whole, they did not tend to see their role as carrying any power or authority that would support their activity as an agent for change in their departments. These early expressions reinforced our curiosity and intensified our interest in department heads because there were some heads who were guiding some change in their departments by utilizing the informal "cement" power, provided by their coordinating responsibilities.

Consistent Role Inconsistency: Preview of the Department Head Study Findings

Our study has not confirmed any one prevailing view. Despite the general perceptions that department heads, by their placement in the particular organizational design of the high school, are in the driver's seat, reality does not parallel these perceptions. Even though principals believe that heads have power and can demonstrate leadership, and even though numerous principals could and do think they give heads power, we have not identified many examples of department heads that reflect these views. Some teachers describe their heads as associates and peers; others suggest that the role provides real possibilities for leadership activities. Teachers are not unanimous in their assessments. The most appropriate characterization of the department head role is its inconsistency in the way it is operationalized across heads within a school, within a district, and across all the districts we have studied. We have found great variability, and that is an accurate catchword for the role, we believe.

A Study of the Role of Department Heads in Change in High Schools

The findings we present in this paper are derived from 3 years of research in 30 American high schools, studies conducted by the Research on the Improvement Process (RIP) Program at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin.

An Overview of High School Change Studies

The RIP high school research has focused directly on the study of change, the kinds of changes taking place, and the role and influence of the various constituent groups on the change process in the high school context. The high schools included in the study were selected to represent the U.S geographically and to represent all sizes of schools, including large urban, suburban, medium city, and small rural schools. These schools were located in school districts that represent a cross section of American school systems.

In Year One, the Phase One study was exploratory in nature. Research staff visited in high schools to gain a sense of how the schools were organized, of the contextual factors that appeared to have importance for change efforts, and to ascertain if and what kinds of changes high schools were attempting.

The Year Two, Phase Two study was more focused in its design and conduct, wherein nine pairs of schools were investigated to learn where changes were originating, how change was managed, and where leadership for change efforts was supplied. This descriptive study provided a great deal of data that answered the study questions (Hall, Guzman, Hord, Huling-Austin, Rutherford, Stiegelbauer, 1984) and on which hypotheses could be generated.

The Year Three, Phase Three study was conducted to explore the roles of specific constituent groups in high school change and to understand the

interrelationships of the groups as they engaged in the process of school improvement. These groups included principals, assistant principals, department heads, teachers, and central office personnel. The findings related to the role of department heads across all three phases of the study provide the central messages of this section of the paper.

Data Sources and Analysis

This paper represents data accumulated from 30 schools involved in Phases I, II, and III of the study. The sites included department heads from a wide variety of academic and technical disciplines. In addition to the math, English, science, and social sciences heads, data were collected from the heads of business education, vocational education, industrial arts, performing arts, and many more. Some of these departments ranged in size from 22 English teachers to 4 business education staff. Data about department heads were collected not only from self-report interviews with the heads about their role, but also from interviews with teachers, principals, district office personnel, and students to gain their perceptions and to cross verify the data. All interviews were tape recorded. From this pool of data, behaviors of department heads were identified and grouped into categories based on functions. Conversations with staff of Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland, about their materials and policies regarding the role and expectations of Resource Teachers (their title for department heads) contributed significantly to the framework developed for this paper and the analysis of these data. The categories of functions developed were:

1. Serves as communication liaison
2. Serves as department manager
3. Assists teachers in improvement of their instructional performance

4. Participates in program improvement and change

5. Fosters cooperative relationships.

To further refine the data, a subsample was selected for additional analysis. Four districts, chosen to represent community types, comprised the subsample drawn from Phase II of the study. Tapes of department head interviews from these districts (eight high schools) provided the base for additional data analysis. The data were coded according to department head functions, school level and district level policies, and relationships of heads with others. Additionally, the number of changes initiated by each department head was noted. Relevant comments by individual department heads were also recorded. This analysis provided data from which a continuum of the powerfulness of the department head in change was initially developed. The validity of the continuum was confirmed through data retrieved from the complete Phase I, II, and III samples.

Findings: What Is The Role?

This part of the paper describes the array of functions, noted above, that can contribute to the department head role. We examine the various behaviors in these functions that were found across the 30 high school sites studied. (See Figure 1 for complete inventory of behaviors in all functions.) Then we explain how the functions and their inventory of behaviors are put together to form six configurations of the department head role.

The majority of department heads are classroom teachers. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that for most heads there is a dual responsibility. On the one hand, there are department-related obligations; and on the other, a significant amount of the head's time, attention, and energy must be directed

Figure 1
Inventory of Behaviors by Functions

Function I. Serves as communication liaison
Communicates across the members of the department
Links the department and members upward to school administrators
Meets with principal and other school administrators
Links department upward to the district level
Carries information down to department
Coordinates course schedules
Places students in appropriate classes

Function II. Serves as department manager
Conducts department meetings on management issues
Designs the budget
Selects textbooks
Maintains material and equipment systems for procurement, storage, distribution, retrieval, and security
Assists teachers in use and care of equipment
Supervises clerical and instructional aides
Obtains, monitors, facilitates work of substitute teachers
Provides leadership in various areas
Interviews prospective teachers with administrators and makes recommendations
Assists principals in teacher evaluation
Assists principals in teacher evaluation conferences
Evaluates teachers
Hires and terminates teachers

Function III. Assists teachers in improving performance
Observes and assesses classroom teaching
Confers with teachers about observations
Assists teachers in instructional activities
Assumes leadership in planning inservice for department
Participates in planning school-level inservice activities
Supports, encourages, and creates opportunities for teachers' growth and development

Function IV. Participates in program improvement and change
Appraises program quality
Reviews and evaluates materials
Stays informed of new trends and programs
Stimulates teachers' awareness of research and program development
Provides leadership in curriculum development, implementation, revision
Assists in curriculum improvement and implementation of curriculum policies

Function V. Fosters cooperative relationships
Supports the relationships of colleagues, students, and parents
Fosters cohesive and cooperative interpersonal relationships
Confers with other departments informally
Develops cooperative relationships with other departments
Expresses acceptance, humor, praise as appropriate
Responds positively to challenges
Assists principal in public relations
Communicates with the community about the local school and school district

to classroom teaching duties and students.

Function I. Serves as a communication liaison. Department heads engage in communication that is both horizontal, across the members of the department, and vertical, up and down. Vertical communication, directed upward, can be observed through a variety of linking behaviors: to the school's administrators, to the district level subject supervisor to whom the department is responsible in matters of curriculum programs and instruction, and possibly to other district office personnel. To do this, some heads meet regularly with the principal and other school administrators and with subject supervisors. The purpose of upward communication is to keep the principals and others informed about the department, its administration, and programs.

The head is a liaison for downward communication in that messages from the school level and district level administrators and supervisors are carried to the department members by the head. The head may also coordinate the work of the department, school administration and counselors in the development of course schedules and the placement of students in appropriate classes.

Function II. Serves as department manager. In this part of the department head's role, it is expected that the head will conduct department meetings that focus on matters of management importance to the school and the department. Such items would include the design of an acceptable budget and accommodations of department teachers' budget requests, and selection of textbooks. The head also maintains a system for procurement, storage, distribution, retrieval, and security of materials and equipment. Assisting teachers in the use and care of equipment is another dimension of this function. Supervising any clerical or instructional aides that may be assigned to the department is another dimension, as is the procurement, monitoring, and facilitating of the work of substitute teachers. In this

latter case, checking and interpreting the lesson plans of the regular teacher to the substitute would be typical.

Some heads participate with administrators in interviewing and recommending prospective teachers for the department. Additionally, some assist their principals in the evaluation of teachers and may participate in teacher's evaluation conferences. Other department heads, though few in number in the sample, hold the rank of administrator and, in this case, may very likely have the responsibility to hire teachers for the department and to be the teachers' official evaluator, soliciting advice and counsel from the principal when needed.

Function III. Assists teachers in improvement of their instructional performance. To fulfill this function, the head visits classes for the purpose of assessing instructional quality and confers with teachers about the observations. The head participates with teachers and/or district level subject supervisors in planning school level inservice activities and assumes the leadership role in planning those of the department. The head works directly with teachers to assist them in a host of instruction-related activities: interpreting diagnostic test results to assess each student's abilities; adapting the district program to the needs of the local school; helping to plan for each classroom instructional group through adaptation of the curriculum to the needs of the individual students; developing daily and long-range plans; organizing and managing the classroom; developing skills and techniques of instruction; making productive use of aides, volunteer parents, and others; selecting, locating, obtaining, and using instructional materials and equipment; developing skills in self-evaluation and self-improvement; establishing positive relationships with students, and involving students in their program planning and selection. The head supports, encourages, and

creates opportunities for teachers' ongoing professional growth and development.

Function IV. Participates in program improvement and change. In this function the head acts in a variety of ways to contribute to improvement. One of these activities is in providing leadership in departmental curriculum development, implementation, and revision. Heads stay informed of new trends and programs in their subject field. They stimulate their teachers' awareness of research and program development in their discipline. Heads may review and evaluate instructional materials at the school and district levels, and appraise program quality. Heads assist in district and local level curriculum improvement efforts, and in the implementation of policies regarding curriculum.

Function V. Fosters cooperative relationships. The head works in this area to support the relationships of colleagues, students, and parents. Helping to foster a cohesive and cooperative pattern of interpersonal relationships within the department is a dimension of this function, as well as developing cooperative relationships with other departments. The head confers frequently with members of the department on an informal basis, and expresses acceptance, praise, and humor as appropriate. To foster healthy department morale, heads put problems in perspective; they respond positively to challenges and work effectively with people. For reaching the goals of good working relationships, they reach out to make parents and the community feel a part of the school. They communicate with the community about the local school and about the other schools in the district.

Findings: Cumulative Function Configurations

In the preceding section we presented an array of department head behaviors that we have seen. We organized the behaviors that were related to

each other into functions, but all behaviors in a function group may not necessarily be present in a particular department head's operationalization of the role. We now present groupings, or configurations, of the functions that we have observed in the department head role in high schools. Each configuration is a description of an actual department head, used as an example. We present six configurations that seem to be reasonably different, but that also appear to capture all the heads in our three-phase study.

Each of the six department head configurations (Figure 2) seem to lie along a continuum composed of less and more of the functions. More functions appear to contribute to a larger and more influential role and add to the power and status of the head. We discuss the six configurations below.

Communicator. Dr. Wesley Michaels is the chairman of the math department at Solar Beach High School. The high school is 1 of 15 high schools in a large southeastern district that has a very active staff development department designed to provide both district-wide and school-based inservice programs. These programs seemed not to touch the teachers in the math department at Solar Beach, and no efforts were initiated for making inservice available, either by teachers, by Michaels, or by school administrators of this suburban school.

As a department head, Michaels was given one class period per day to devote to math department duties. In addition, a stipend determined by the number of teachers in the department was provided. There was no job description of the department head role at the district level, and expectations from the school administration were ambiguous. Michaels served his department as a liaison, Function I. He received memoranda from the district administrative office and passed these on to teachers, as well as communicating with them regarding school level matters. He attended meetings

Figure 2: Configurations of the Department Head Role

Functions	Roles					
	Communicator	Coordinator Manager	Emerging Assister	Teacher Improver	Program Improver	Evaluating Administrator
I. Serves as communication liaison	*	*	*	*	*	*
II. Serves as department manager		*	*	*	*	*[1]
III. Assists teachers in improving performance				*	*	*
IV. Participates in program improvement and change					*	*
V. Fosters cooperative relationships			*		*	*

[1]The distinction between the Program Improver and Evaluating Administrator is in Function II. The Evaluating Administrator holds hiring/firing authority, not given to the Program Improver.

with other heads at the school chaired by the principal or assistant principals; he attended district meetings of all the math heads. He disseminated information from these meetings down to teachers. The principal relied on him to communicate to him about what was happening at the district level.

Michaels also engaged in vertical communication up the channel by serving as an advocate for teachers. He listened to their needs, was a mediator between teachers and school administrators, and was the voice box of the teachers at the district level regarding district priorities and plans, and expressed their opinions and concerns about such matters. He called meetings of the department's teachers to discuss policy and other issues, to relay information, or to solicit their input in order to transmit it up the line. His total repertoire of behaviors came from Function I (Serves as communication liaison).

Like his fellow teachers who were receiving no professional development, Michaels received neither preparation nor training for his department head role. Since there was no district policy for selecting heads, he was selected by the principal and confirmed by the teachers.

Coordinator Manager. The English department at Washington High School is chaired by Elizabeth Bostick. Bostick has her master's degree and has been head of the department for the 3 years since the principal asked her to serve as head. She believes she is a good manager for her department, in terms of inventorying and surveying teachers for equipment and materials needs. These she orders, in addition to texts and other resources. She discards outdated texts and materials, and arranges and stocks the storerooms.

Bostick is in charge of decisions about which teachers get first priorities of materials and of deciding who gets how much of what paper,

books, media, and other resources. In this regard, she has some vestige of power.

Like Michaels, she attends school level meetings of all department heads and communicates the results to her 20 teachers. This she does by written memoranda, as she seldom calls meetings of all her teachers. "They don't have time," she says, and she tries to protect them against meetings. This midwestern medium city district does not call all department heads together; thus, there is no horizontal sharing among English heads. Vertical communication is limited to serving as a pipeline up and down the school organizational chart.

There is no release time, no extra salary, no job description at any level, and no training to prepare heads in this district for this managing role. Bostick rejected any notion of the role as involving substantive work on instruction with teachers. She said she would be very uncomfortable observing or assisting teachers since she did not have the privilege of evaluating teachers. Clearly, her configuration is made up of Functions I (Communication liaison) and II (Department manager).

Emerging Assister. Phillip Davies is a head in the same system as Bostick, a school system that provides no time, stipend, policy, or training for department heads. Davies is a well-seasoned head of the social sciences department and close to the principal's ear. He is regularly sought by the principal to give advice and counsel about matters at Washington High School; thus, he feels quite secure in his position and utilization of Functions I and II. He spends some considerable energy locating opportunities for his students to attend events and to participate in activities that will enhance their social sciences learning. Similarly, Davies finds possibilities for

some of his social sciences department teachers to attend meetings and conferences that will contribute to their growth.

The teachers have indicated their interest in learning new ideas and techniques through peer observation. Davies has seized this opportunity to establish a formal procedure whereby teachers inform him when they will be teaching particular topics and using specific instructional strategies. He then informs the other staff of upcoming opportunities, and those who are particularly interested and can be free of their class responsibility go to visit and observe their colleagues.

Davies has a history of behaviors in Function V (Fostering cooperative relationships) as he brings students together to attend social science educational functions. Related to this he works with parents and encourages their participation in the social sciences program, particularly as it relates to providing opportunities for students to experience expanded activities outside of class. Now, recently he has been working on fostering relationships within the department as a stronger basis for peer teacher visitation. The social science teachers are housed in the high school in a common wing of the building and Davies encourages teachers to regularly stop by the departmental office which serves as a common meeting place. He feels this will contribute to more department cohesion. Many of the social science teachers have a common lunch period and converse nearly daily on some department topic.

Davies and the teachers are hoping to do some visitation in other schools. Unlike the other heads in this school, Davies attends district-wide bi-monthly meetings of the heads of social science departments, an anomaly in the district. Davies has been active in promoting these meetings which occur after the duty day, but which give heads the opportunity to share and compare

experiences and activities. As a result of these relationships and developing network, Davies is hopeful of making cross-school visitation a reality.

Teacher Improver. In the science department Robin Hedges is chairperson. He is supported in the role by 1 hour a day release time from class and a duty day lengthened by 1 half hour and 2 extra weeks added to the duty year. He is compensated by an increased salary. District policy articulates the expectations for the department head role, and inservice is provided for department heads. Some of Hedges' colleagues who are chairs of other departments regularly observe teachers and have feedback sessions, but typically develop no improvement objectives with teachers as a result. "I hope they take suggestions and do it voluntarily," they say. "Even though the district tells us to act to help teachers improve, we really have no clout because we don't hire or fire them." Many heads say that they have a concern about disturbing good relationships with their teachers, and this causes them to be quite moderate in their approach to teachers. Other heads invite teachers to observe them or other teachers teaching, to gain understanding about a teaching problem. The head may serve as a model in this case.

Hedges seems to have found workable techniques with his teachers. He provides them thoroughly with "down" travelling information and serves them visibly and tenaciously in their point of view up the channel, Function I (Communication liaison). He has built their science facility into a well-equipped and managed laboratory/workplace, Function II (Department manager). He exemplifies Function III (Assists teachers in improving) by using various strategies. With some teachers he introduces new ideas, demonstrates frequently how to teach and team teaches with them. With one teacher he has been spending alternate days teaching her a new computer-based course so that it will continue to be offered to students. He is working

closely with three teachers in planning, organizing, and structuring lessons so that higher level thinking skills will be included.

One particular teacher is receiving a considerable amount of Hedges' attention. This biology teacher has been identified as in need of help in instruction. Hedges has been working with him in a focused way, developing plans, observing his classroom teaching performance, identifying in feedback sessions "poor" teaching. Together, they make a plan for improvement that is based on a strategy of incremental change over time. With the biology teacher, Hedges is careful to specify areas to be attended to and provides a time line of expectations. He monitors to ascertain if change has occurred, and then continues to coach depending on the results of monitoring. Hedges says this is a slow process, requiring his patience and abundant persuasion.

Program Improver. "As department head I can encourage, teach, lead, foster, but I cannot demand." That's exactly what language arts department head Beatrice Benson does -- leading, fostering, teaching, encouraging, in that order -- preceded by recognizing students' difficulties in reading and analyzing the secondary school reading program. In this district one of the department head's responsibilities is to be the person responsible for making research findings and new and different approaches to teaching accessible to the department's teachers. Thus, new knowledge is typically sought and shared by Benson. She found the "experience story approach" at the elementary school and thought it could be a possibility for helping high school youngsters read better. A second, and equally useful, resource was a local university professor of curriculum theory. Collaboratively Benson and the professor developed a writing program built on the assumption that writing and reading are inextricably linked, and the one would impact the other.

Having exercised leadership in developing a new program, Benson's push now was to foster, teach, encourage its use. "A difficulty that reflects how high schools work is I cannot now say, 'You will teach this.'" Half the teachers were persuaded to volunteer the first year, and they were provided 10 weeks of after-school, hour-long inservice in how to teach the program. "You can't give one 3-hour shot and think you've done it. Training must be incremental and spread out and taught like you would teach anyone anything. Staff development is crucial." An experimental/control group study was done, with pre/post reading and writing scores of students as the dependent variable. The substantial differences in scores of the treatment group was celebrated, and all but a couple of the remainder of the faculty received training and began use of the program. Now it's old hat and now new; it's an institutionalized part of the language arts program.

Benson serves as the link between her department and a wide network of administrators, district curriculum supervisors, university consultants, and others. Benson views herself as the department's pipeline to the world, Function I (Communication liaison). She keeps them informed and in touch. Since she teaches only two classes a day, she has abundant time to keep the department well managed and running smoothly, Function II (Department manager). Functions III (Assists teachers in improving) and IV (Participates in program improvement and change) are expressed, for instance, in the development of the reading/writing program and in the inservice program she supplied to train her teachers in the new techniques of the new program. The foundation of this department head's work rests on her continual relationship building across her department and with other department heads in the school. She believes that collegial relationships can help her sell her programs to teachers, Function V (Fostering cooperative relationships). This department

head is rewarded for her efforts by a salary commensurate with the assistant principals. She came to her department head role through a rigorous but clearly articulated procedure of qualifying examinations and interview. Assignments, promotions, and role expectations are precisely set forth by the district.

Evaluating Administrator. Clear school and district policies enumerate Josh Kendall's department leadership status. He is classified as an administrator and as such he provides leadership for the department's educational programs. He does this during his one period a day release time designated for departmental responsibilities. He hires and terminates teachers in his department. He provides the communication network for the department, Function I (Communication liaison). He does the accounting, ordering, and inventorying of materials and equipment and is also responsible for repairs, Function II (Department manager). He works with teachers on instructional problems, Function III (Assists teachers in improving). He monitors teachers progress through observing instruction and using stated criteria for assessing teacher performance. A feedback conference follows the observation. Out of this process teachers are clearly evaluated in terms of instructional improvement. Josh provides comments and suggestions to teachers in the feedback session. He looks for improvement on his next visit on those items specified as current problems. He recommends frequently that teachers videotape themselves so they can have a self-evaluation technique.

Developing and delivering curriculum and new programs for special student populations is another part of Kendall's work, Function IV (Participates in program improvement and change). He is responsible for the development of a philosophy of curriculum evaluation and change. Kendall states that department heads provide services as well as leadership, and that, in any

case, they are a strong group. In his position as a line rather than a staff person, he has a special relationship with teachers, which he is careful to nurture and attend to, Function V (Fostering cooperative relationships).

It is important to note that there is not an equal frequency distribution of department heads across the configuration types. In our sample, frequency decreases across the continuum of configurations, left to right. This means that the Communicator heads are most abundant while the Evaluating Administrators are quite rare. The continuum also reflects the amount of power provided to department heads in guiding change (Figure 3).

In Figure 3 we have indicated by labels how the accumulation of additional functions increases the power of the role. We have chosen to label the Communicator and the Coordinator types of department heads as "Powerless," regarding the facilitation of teachers' work and guiding their change of practice. Heads in these roles quite likely are in schools where policy that would define the department head role as that of an agent for teachers' change is lacking.

For the Emerging Assister, Teacher Improver, and Program Improver Configurations, we classify these as "Persuasive." To explain, in the case of the Emerging Assister, Davies is taking some steps to facilitate teachers' interest in changing their practice, though he is not supported in his efforts by school or district expectations. The Teacher Improver and Program Improver are clearly guiding and facilitating change and they do this with infinite skill and a policy that charges them to do so. But each says that in the final analysis, the teacher can reject their help or give little attention, since they have no real power to back up their assistance efforts.

The most powerful department head role is the Evaluating Administrator. This configuration looks identical in its functions to that of Program

Figure 3: Accumulating Power of Role Configurations

	Roles					
	Powerless			Persuasive		Powerful
	Communicator	Coordinator Manager	Emerging Assister	Teacher Improver	Program Improver	Evaluating Administrator
Functions						
I. Serves as communication liaison	*	*	*	*	*	*
II. Serves as department manager		*	*	*	*	*[1]
III. Assists teachers in improving performance				*	*	*
IV. Participates in program improvement and change					*	*
V. Fosters cooperative relationships			*		*	*

[1]The distinction between the Program Improver and Evaluating Administrator is in Function II. The Evaluating Administrator holds hiring/firing authority. not given to the Program Improver.

Improver. However, the Evaluating Administrators' behaviors are defined by policy and these persons have the responsibility and privilege to hire and fire. This makes them a line administrator and gives them direct authority over teachers; undoubtedly, an incentive to listen, consider, and probably act on department heads' suggestions for change of practice. Such a policy and its linked behaviors were rarely present in the data.

Findings: What Shapes The Role?

While the department head might wish to engage in particular behaviors and functions, there are situational factors beyond his/her control that influence the possibilities of the role. The principal's policies or district policy, for instance, may shape the role in ways which mandate certain behaviors while discouraging others. For example, a principal may appoint department heads in the school and then restrict them to communicator/liaison activities. In another case, district policies may enumerate specific responsibilities which promote and encourage department heads to take an active role in program improvement and change. The principal, district and other influences external to the school may represent the sources from which fiscal rewards, training, and other influential factors come (Figure 4). In Figure 4 the functions of the six configurations are noted, as are situational factors that are part of the context of the heads of that type.

Situational factors. Situational factors can include many things. In our analysis of the head's role the presence or absence of three factors -- policy, monetary compensation, and slack time -- seemed to be particularly influencial related to specific role functions. Policy can be formulated at either the district or building level. The existence of policies that clearly define the job as an instructional helper supports the development of the department head's role as an improver of programs and teachers. However, in

Figure 4: Factors That Influence The Department Head Role

	Powerless		Persuasive			Powerful
	Communicator	Coordinator Manager	Emerging Assister	Teacher Improver	Program Improver	Evaluating Administrator
Role Functions	I	I, II	I, II, V	I, II, III	I, II, III IV, V	I, II, III IV, V
Situational Factors	Time provided	No time	No time	Time provided	Time provided (teaches only 1 or 2 classes)	Time provided
	Stipend provided	No stipend	No stipend	Stipend provided	Stipend provided	Stipend provided
	No policy	No policy	No policy	Policy clear	Policy clear	Policy clear
	No training	No training	No training	Training provided	Training provided	Training provided

the absence of formal policy, a department head took action in providing inservice to teachers. This function of assisting teachers emerged and developed because the department head had high energy, credibility with faculty, and the principal allowed the head to develop and implement such programs. The principal did not actively support the activity, but his lack of resistance served as passive acceptance. To rely on passive acceptance in order to do those things necessary for guiding change cannot realistically be supported. Districts and schools must formalize policy in order to shape the role of department head in guiding change.

When the department head significantly participates in guiding teachers' instructional change, monetary compensation seems to be present. The compensation ranges from a few hundred dollars in one district to a district in which a department head receives only $50 less than an assistant principal. Even more important than monetary compensation, however, is the inclusion of slack time in the schedule for a department head. This time is crucial in making it possible for the department head to do such things as observe teachers' performance in classrooms. Time is crucial for department head activities that foster teachers' professional growth and development, and for developing the viability of the department head as an instructional leader and improver. It is extremely difficult to do these things unless time is provided in which to do them. This is an obvious fact.

An additional factor that may influence the department head role is training or lack of training for the role. The study revealed few training opportunities specifically designed for department heads. Usually individuals were placed in the position with few guidelines, no preparation, and only a vague idea of the purpose of the role. More than any other factor, the paucity of training probably allows the role to be idiosyncratically shaped.

All too frequently the department head operates within parameters that are loosely defined and difficult to articulate. Numerous situational factors influence the head in ways that foster or inhibit the development of the head as a facilitator of teachers' instructional practices. Yet, a few individuals emerge under the worst of circumstances as influential department heads.

Selection. The process determining who enters the department head role can significantly influence who is placed in the role and thus what the role can become. In some districts persons are typically able to actively seek the department head position either through examination or volunteering. In other districts, the road to the department head role includes election by peers and a 3-year rotation cycle. A principal may appoint an individual who does not truly desire to function as a department head, or who is not credible with other teachers. The selection process may discourage some individuals who would be very capable from pursuing the role because of perceived entry difficulties. On the other hand, informal selection procedures may encourage individuals to enter into what is perceived as an undemanding role. These same selection circumstances may foster entry of truly competent individuals in the role. In either case, selection can be a critical factor in the development of the department head role.

Summary. With no time, no fiscal remuneration, and no formal job description, teachers conferred with the title of department chair or head are typically able to assume the role of communicator, Function I. With no benefits whatsoever, including no allocated time in the duty day or extension of the duty year, they may also serve as Manager, Function II. Some individuals are also able to provide informal instructional help and guidance to other teachers without this function being designated in their role. However, because it lacks formalized power, the impact of such assistance may

be extremely limited and offered only sporadically. Therefore, if Functions III and IV, those of assisting teacher's improvement and growth, and facilitating program improvement and change, are to be significantly developed, two things are essential: 1) formally provided time, and 2) policies which enunciate the expectations and which confer authority to engage in these functions. Fiscal remuneration adds the authority aura and status.

Findings: Relationships With Others

As with other phases of the data analyses, the relationships of department heads to others are wide ranging. Of particular interest are the relationships between department heads and district office personnel, the principal, teachers, and other department heads.

Other department heads. In our intensive subsample of 8 and the broader sample of 30 schools, we found that department heads related with each other on two levels: building and district. Across the district some department heads met as part of district requirements to coordinate each school's curriculum to larger goals, or they met in response to tasks associated with a specific innovation. For example, business heads met in order to update their district goals and objectives from a vocation orientation to more rigorous, academic standards. Within buildings, department heads rarely met with one another without an outside impetus. For example, as part of a principals' cabinet, department heads communicated with one another. On their own, department heads seem not to coordinate with or seek help from other department heads outside of their academic speciality.

The district office. The department head often serves as the communication link between the district office and teachers. For this purpose, several districts held monthly department head meetings in which information was shared for dissemination at the building level. Some of the

meetings were decision making and others were merely for transmitting information. On the other hand, in several districts department heads had no direct, regular communication with personnel in the district office at all. In these situations information was usually passed through the principal to the department head, then to the teachers.

The principal. Our data suggest that department heads have an either-or relationship with the building principal -- either they are part of a team that meets on some regular basis with the principal, or they see him/her only as specific need arises. Regular meetings with principals may be truly powerful decision-making and decision-sharing sessions, or they may serve only for funneling information from the top down -- two very different relationships. Some principals who do not engage in formal, regular meetings with department heads as a group may still include some heads in the decision-making process. Some department heads, because of longevity or particular ability, became invaluable parts of the principal's information management team. For example, in one school a department head became a principal's trusted advisor after persisting in asking the principal for numerous changes in departmental course offerings, although this was not the standard procedure for such requests. The changes were implemented with minimal demand on the building administrators and were accepted by students and staff. The principal perceived the department head as successful and came to rely on the head's input in other areas usually not delegated to the head, such as hiring and scheduling.

The department teachers. The relationship of the department head with teachers in their department seems to hinge on the heads' perception of their own role. If department heads considered themselves to be primarily managers/supply orderers, then their relationships with teachers were usually

described as "friendly" or as, "I get along with my teachers and everyone." However, if the department heads perceived their role as being instructional assistants, their relationships with teachers were generally described as "professional," and interchange was portrayed as more formal. It was interesting when analyzing teachers' interview data to note that no department heads were described by teachers as autocratic.

Implications and Recommendations

We have presented some ideas about the way department heads go about their work. We organized their behaviors as groups of functions. We described some configurations of the functions and provided examples of the ways the department head role is expressed in schools. We have discussed the influence, or lack of influence, of various situational factors. What are some messages from these data about the department head role that serve to inform us, pique our interest, cause us to speculate, or stimulate us to additional inquiry?

The Department Head As A Guide For Change

Even within the "powerless" configurations, there are additional contextual factors that can foster the department head's role in change. In the "persuasive" configurations, these same contextual advantages could strengthen the head's role in guiding change.

The department as a community. Of interest to school administrators who wish to build cohesive departments is a clue about supportive contexts. In our studies, the location or placement of the department members within the building appeared to be a factor in department heads' influence. We noted that those departments whose teachers were housed in close proximity and that had an office or workrooms specifically for their teachers' use had more

department member interaction and exchange. Further, the department head in this situation seemed able to exercise influence because of frequent and regular contact. There were some departments scattered vertically and horizontally across the building. This resulted in department individuals rarely seeing each other. Some heads whose departments were separated spatially, regularly delivered messages and materials to teachers' rooms in order to take the occasion for quick monitoring or to interact personally. Under these circumstances, the opportunity for guiding a change process faded away in the time between "circuit" runs by the head.

Teacher growth. There is a widely held view in high schools that teachers are subject-centered experts. Many have master's degrees, long years of teaching, and thus have earned their "terminal" degree. These notions seem to suggest to teachers that they require no further attention to professional development. This view is reinforced by heads who appear to lack a common language to use in talking with teachers about instruction. In their comments, department heads expressed no common image of effective instruction and appeared to know little (and have not been trained) about instructional supervision and improvement. We would suggest that heads need as a group to discuss instruction, in addition to content. By providing this type of support, the scope of the head's role could expand.

The department head as a school improver. In most cases, the department head is a responder to other change initiators. Heads lament their lack of time to engage in the planning and implementation of change. This unavailability of time is supported in our data. Monitoring, supporting, and facilitating all take time. Many heads lack not only time to fill their roles effectively, but also any policy, or broad-based expectations that they will be an initiator or facilitator of change in teachers' practice. To become an

active guide for change the department head must be seen by administrators and teachers as responsible for improvement in the school.

Policy Development

Among the most significant findings in our study was the influence of a formalized policy that articulates the scope of department head's power to guide change. While policy does not insure that heads will embrace the function of change facilitator, it does promote the function as the norm. Policy development is needed in many areas. We discuss a few policies that could realistically be implemented and which promote the improvement of practice.

The absence of teacher inservice. Few heads report the existence of inservice programs within their department. They do report providing teachers with an overview of new curriculum, doing master lessons and being a "cheerleader." Many heads are not seen as instruction-oriented nor as being concerned with teachers' professional development. Given that many heads have only one hour for the assessment, planning, design and operation of inservice sessions, in addition to their other duties, it is understandable that little is occurring. There also appears to be little expectation that heads will be responsible for teacher growth. If heads are to become involved in change, they must become involved as leaders of their fellow teachers in pertinent inservice presentations. Policy development is needed to insure the time and authority necessary to participate in this function.

Authority to act. Several principals suggested that in order for heads to have a real role in school and teacher change, they need the clout to support their assistance efforts with teachers. More specifically, this probably means moving department heads into an administrator category with

line authority to evaluate teachers. Many observers of high schools see this arrangement on the horizon.

Time to act. If department heads are to become active in guiding the change process, Functions III (Assists teachers in improving performance), IV (Participates in program improvement and change) and V (Fosters cooperative relationships) need to be incorporated into existing configurations. However, simply delegating these functions will not insure action. Time must be provided as a matter of policy formulation, along with authority to act. Then department head action in change is more likely to occur.

The Critical Elements

The implementation of policies that clearly define the role of the department head as a facilitator of change sets the stage for action. Unfortunately, establishing the policy does not guarantee that heads will develop into change facilitators. Rather, specific training to clarify expectations and to provide models will increase the likelihood. Coupled with monitoring to insure role implementation, the stage will be set, roles will be developed and change will have more chance for success. This means that staff development and monitoring must be provided to department heads after the formulation of clear policies.

Staff development for department heads. The department heads in our study articulated numerous suggestions concerning their own needs for inservice. Among those emphasized were training in the observation of teachers and methods for collection of meaningful data. Heads wanted to be able to look into classrooms, identify existing problems and support the identification with data. Additional nominations for inservice were workshops on interpersonal relations and how to be a change agent. There was a

reoccurring suggestion to combine the two skills in order to learn how to work together with a teacher to bring about a meaningful professional change.

Department heads expressed a need to learn to nurture departments' capacity to work on common goals and to foster cooperation in work. Problem-solving skills for working in groups was another dimension of need. Staff development through independent learning and growth (not always in a group setting) was cited as another specific department head need. Finally, time and training for contemplation and reflection on the issues and problems of the department was an often heard plea.

Monitoring of department heads. From change process research it is now clear that training is one essential element in helping people to develop new knowledge and skills and to perform in new ways. What is also clear is that training alone is not enough (Hord, Huling & Stiegelbauer, 1983). This, we believe, applies also to department heads in high schools.

We identified sites where department heads functioned as teacher assisters and program improvers, where these roles were defined by policy and supported by staff development. Staff development that targeted such role definition appeared to increase the probability that heads would acquire skills and insights and work with teachers in more influential ways, resulting in improved teacher performance.

However, there is no unequivocal assurance that department heads will be able to carry out these functions even though they are supported by policy and encouraged through inservice programs. Critical to the implementation of these functions may be additional attention that combines regular monitoring that serves to assess heads' needs and the provision of coaching and consultation (Joyce & Showers, 1982) that supports the development of the expected role configuration, i.e., teacher and program improver.

Who supplies the monitoring and support for the heads? Obvious persons at the school site are high school principals or assistant principals. In some of our study schools, the principals and the two (or three) assistant principals divided the departments among themselves and identified those departments with which they would be more closely aligned administratively. Such administrators are in a key position to provide proactive monitoring, supporting, and facilitating to heads as they are changing their role practice. A monitoring and nurturing facilitator is as necessary to heads as they change their role as a facilitator (the department head) is to teachers as they strive to make improvements. Other persons who could supply the support role to heads are district office curriculum coordinators or subject specialists for the particular head's discipline.

Research Needs

It is clear that studies focused on the department head are needed. The findings of this study provide a broad overview or mapping of what heads do and of the factors that seem to be relevant. More studies are needed that explore the relationships of the various factors to the behaviors of heads, and relate these to effects on teachers and change. Such studies should further illuminate the role, answering the questions: What functions do heads use in particular contexts with what effects? What selection processes are used and how does the selection process influence the role? What factors should be considered in the selection process? What are the training and professional development needs of heads? What kinds of policy and resources support and contribute to effective "headmanship"? How best can heads, school administrators, and teachers relate for purposes of change and improvement? In particular, what are the significant contextual factors related to the Evaluating Administrator department head role, and what effects are gained

from this role? What strategies can be recommended to heads for working with teachers to bring about their continuing growth and development?

Useful qualitative data that provides new insights into the department head role have been acquired from this study. What is required now are quantitative studies that provide more specificity and precision to inform questions about needed policy and resources for the development of the department head role.

In Conclusion

From department heads, classroom teachers, school and district level administrators, and a small number of students in 30 schools, data were collected about the roles that department heads play in change in high schools. From these data, behaviors of heads were identified and organized into functions that were then combined to describe the varying roles, from powerful to powerless, that department heads play in change.

We believe the department head role is a very viable one for facilitating the change process, and, consequently, a very promising one for assisting secondary school teachers and administrators in school improvement efforts. It behooves practitioners, policymakers, change researchers, and others studying high school reform to understand the possibilities. Just as important will be consideration of the preparation and support of individuals responsible for this role. We believe these issues warrant our immediate attention.

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